



## ***Committee on Finance and the Northampton City Council***

*Councilor Gina-Louise Sciarra, Chair  
Councilor Marianne LaBarge, Vice Chair  
Councilor Michael J. Quinlan, Jr.  
Councilor John Thorpe*

### **On line Zoom Meeting**

Meeting Date: May 21, 2020

Note: The Finance Committee Meeting took place during the City Council Meeting as announced. The City Council Meeting began at 7 p.m.

1. **Meeting Called To Order:** At 7:52 p.m., Councilor Sciarra called the meeting to order.
2. **Roll Call:** Present were committee members Gina-Louise Sciarra (Chair), Marianne LaBarge (Vice-Chair), Michael J. Quinlan, Jr. and John Thorpe. Also present from the City Council were William H. Dwight, Alex Jarrett, Karen Foster, Rachel Maiore and Jim Nash.
3. **Approval of Minutes From The Previous Meeting**
  - A. **Minutes of May 7, 2020**

Councilor LaBarge moved to approve the minutes of May 7, 2020. Councilor Thorpe seconded. The motion passed unanimously 4:0 by roll call vote.
4. **Financial Orders**
  - A. **20.052 An Order Authorizing Acquisition of Easements for Drainage Improvements on Rocky Hill Road (Route 66)**

Councilor Sciarra read the order.

Councilor Quinlan moved to forward the order with a positive recommendation. Councilor Thorpe seconded.

Office of Planning and Sustainability Director Wayne Feiden explained that when the Ice Pond subdivision was developed, a clever drainage solution was employed. Rather than build a detention pond, developers took advantage of an old ice pond. Whenever it rains, drainage goes to the ice pond and flows to an outlet structure under Route 66. Partly due to climate change, they have been seeing an increased frequency of storms and some of those storms are threatening Route 66.

The design of the pond creates a lot of maintenance challenges for the homeowner's association. With the proposal for improvements, the association would still be in charge of maintenance but their costs would be somewhat reduced. More significantly from the city's standpoint, it would reduce a major threat to Route 66. He referred to a picture included in the packet showing damage to the roadway from the last hurricane.

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The city has a program called “Northampton Designs with Nature” in which planners look all over the city for opportunities to take advantage of natural systems to reduce costs due to flooding and undersized drainage pipes. Pipes and levies are necessary and irreplaceable, but there are times when they can use natural systems such as ice ponds to catch water before it enters the pipes. A \$20,000 grant paid for the Ice Pond project’s design and permitting. They worked with the homeowner’s association, which was very excited about it. As part of the process, the city applied for a FEMA grant. They originally thought they had a lot of time, but FEMA wrote them about a month ago to say they were short-listed but needed to give FEMA an easement by June 2<sup>nd</sup> or they were going to be passed over. This is the reason for the request for two readings.

The transaction was further delayed because the original developers failed to convey an interest in the easement to some of the lot owners as intended. Also, the developer, TCB Hospital Hill, LLC, doesn’t even exist anymore although it is a wholly-owned subsidiary of TCB. The reason for the eminent domain taking instead of an easement acquisition is that the transaction was too complicated for the latter.

They’ve reached everyone at TCB and there are no objections, he confirmed. The homeowner’s association is very excited about it and heard no objections from individual property owners.

As the Ward 4 councilor for six years, she had numerous meetings with Ice Pond residents, Councilor Sciarra attested. This is a concern they’ve had for years for which they’ve been trying to find a solution so she can imagine they’re very excited about this.

Councilor Thorpe said Mr. Feiden answered his question about making sure the fractional share holders were notified.

Councilor Quinlan asked whether the grant would cover all the costs.

There is a local match, Mr. Feiden clarified. The city is not committed to it since it must go through the usual city council approval process. The estimated cost is \$350,000. The grant is \$262,000 with a local match of \$87,000. At least \$17,000 of the match will be met by staff time spent overseeing the grant and it’s their understanding that they should be able to get credit for money already spent through a state grant.

Councilor Jarrett said he noticed the legal description and list of title holders and lien holders was blank in the Order of Taking. He talked to City Solicitor Alan Seewald, who said attorneys were still working on the title search, which is supposed to be completed by Tuesday. It’s a little concerning to sign something when there is no listing of who the city is taking land from, he noted.

As far as the legal description, a surveyed plan was included in the council’s packet, Mr. Feiden pointed out. The metes and bound description is basically taken from the survey. The city sent the attorneys the list of property owners based on Assessor’s office records but, in order to identify the title holders, the title examiner needs to search individual titles to see if an easement was ever officially recorded.

Councilor Nash asked if the parties will be identified prior to councilors signing the document.

Mr. Feiden said he hoped they would be willing to sign without the final list but said they could have it in place if need be. The city has to record the Order of Taking within a week. If they insist on waiting for

names they will certainly honor that. They would be happy to scan and send copies of the full Order of Taking before it is recorded, he said.

Councilor Sciarra called the motion to a vote, and it passed 3:0 with one absent (Councilor LaBarge) by roll call vote.

5. **New Business**

None.

6. **Adjourn:** There being no further business, Councilor Thorpe moved to adjourn. Councilor Quinlan seconded. The motion carried on a roll call vote of 3 Yes, 0 No, one absent (Councilor LaBarge). The meeting adjourned at 7:52 p.m.

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